

AGENDA ITEM #14

January 14, 2005

To: Delta Protection Commission

From: Margit Aramburu, Executive Director

Subject: Support for State Parks in the Delta
(For Possible Commission Action)

Recommendation:

Review staff memo, receive public comments, and direct staff to forward comments regarding State Park opportunities in the Delta.

Background:

The Delta Protection Act directs the DPC to "protect, maintain, and where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment, including...recreational activities [and to] assure orderly, balanced conservation and development of delta land resources" (PRC Section 29702). The DPC has a background report on recreation and access, has prepared an inventory of recreation facilities which is currently being updated, released a recreation user survey, and analyzed the economic values of recreation in the Delta. The DPC adopted findings, policies and recommendations in the Land Use and Resource Management Plan for the Primary Zone of the Delta. These documents are available on the DPC's web site: www.delta.ca.gov. The DPC is currently preparing a deltawide recreation plan or strategy that will build upon these earlier documents, and documents prepared by others.

Department of Parks and Recreation's Central Valley Planning Process:

Recently Department of Parks and Recreation Director Ruth Coleman asked for public input in the Department's planning process for the Central Valley. The Department's preliminary strategies include:

- Focus on linear river corridors
- Expand recreation opportunities...along river corridors and in the Delta
- Tell the story of agriculture in California's heartland
- Protect natural resources--oak woodlands, riparian habitats, native grasslands
- Recognize the contributions of the Valley's immigrants
- Learn from California's native people

Existing State Parks in the Delta:

Of the 32 existing Central Valley State Parks, several are located in the Delta:

- Delta Meadows River Park (Locke)
- Brannan Island State Recreation Area
- Franks Tract State Recreation Area

Of these three, only Brannan Island SRA is developed for public use. Delta Meadows has minimal access improvements and no development plan and Franks Tract SRA is a water covered area with no improvements.

Opportunities for Department of Parks and Recreation in the Delta:

- Stone Lakes: State Parks owns approximately 1,000 acres land within the Stone Lakes National Refuge boundary. The land is not improved and is managed as part of the Refuge.
- Railroad Alignment: State Parks owns the railroad alignment from the Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento to Hood. The alignment is not currently used.
- Delta Meadows River Park: While State Parks has undertaken some resource studies, there is no master plan for this site. Only minimal improvements for access and recreation are available. The area is popular with boaters.
- Franks Tract: State Parks owns water covered island; Franks Tract is currently being studied by Department of Water Resources to determine if the island should be managed differently (add levees and berms) to enhance water quality at the State Water Project pumps.

Other Opportunities in the Delta:

State and federal agencies own significant lands in the Delta, possibly providing opportunities for partnerships with Department of Parks and Recreation. Publicly owned lands include: Prospect Island (Bureau of Reclamation), Little Holland Tract (Corps of Engineers), Portions of Sherman Island (Department of Water Resources), Portions of Twichell Island (Department of Water Resources), Yolo Bypass (Department of Fish and Game), Browns Island (East Bay Regional Park District), Big Break (East Bay Regional Park District), and Clifton Court Forebay (Department of Water Resources). Liberty Island was purchased with public funds and is held by Trust for Public Lands.

Possible Recommendations to Department of Parks and Recreation:

- *Continue to participate in the DPC's recreation planning process for the Delta.*
- *Commit funds to develop plans and construct facilities on Department-owned lands in the Delta, particularly Delta Meadows River Park.*
- *Evaluate opportunities to develop appropriate facilities on publicly owned land in the Delta.*
- *Evaluate opportunities to develop appropriate facilities on lands purchased with public funds and held by nonprofits.*